

ESBG NP EVH Community Hub Proposal

A vision for “Ecchinswell Village Hall and Community Centre” – *Outline proposal to create a modern multi-functional centre for our community.*

The centre would be based around the existing Village Hall & recreation field and is located near the School, the Royal Oak Public House and not far from many homes in Ecchinswell and the Church.

- Existing multi-purpose hall for village events and a range of regular/on-off hirings,
- Broader range of sports, leisure, social & play facilities valued and used by local residents,
- A small number of affordable homes prioritised for people with local connections
- Unit(s) that could accommodate a community shop, small business premises, office/meeting space and/or “work near home” facilities, space for medical/other care service delivery.
- Electric car charging points for public use – supply from PV panels on Village Hall and other roof space. Low/zero-carbon facilities with ground source heat pumps, high grade insulation etc.

Base option would use the existing Village Hall/Recreation Field which are owned by ES&BG Parish Council and leased for a nominal rent to “Ecchinswell Village Hall and Recreation Ground” which is a Registered Charity (#301814)

An enhanced option with more facilities could use the land occupied by some/all of the allotments (with relocation as required) plus possibly a narrow strip of land to the west of the allotments to “square-off” the whole site. This option would require a deal with the Sydmonton Court Estate as the allotments are leased from the Estate and the strip to the west is part of a large field.

How and why would this proposal benefit the community?

Current Situation.

The existing hall, recreation field and play park are enthusiastically run by a group of volunteers but overall relatively lightly used. Income from hiring and special events cover costs but are not sufficient to build up material reserves for major maintenance or improvements. When such funds have been required, grants have been sought. The Hall is around 25 years old and currently in sound condition. It is likely that significant maintenance/improvement work on the Hall and management of trees etc will be required over the Plan Period especially as energy efficiency is limited.

The football pitches are exclusively rented out to teams from outside the parish as there has been no local team for many years – this is useful income for the hall and is sustained by volunteers cutting the grass and maintaining the pitches and changing rooms. In the past, there was a local cricket team but this has completely lapsed. The pitches are flat but drainage is relatively poor meaning they are vulnerable to damage and not useable in period of wetter weather.

The play park is well used by younger children from the village but will require extensive refurbishment/replacement in the coming years to sustain a good safety standard.

ES&BG Neighbourhood Plan – Supporting Evidence J

The 13 allotments are leased by ES&BG PC to residents and others from nearby but are not fully utilised. The site has been reliant on volunteers for maintenance. The land on which the allotments sit is leased from the Sydmonton Court Estate for a small annual rent and is accessible from Oakfields Close and the Recreation Ground. A few allotments have had long term tenants but many are only used for a few seasons and then given up. The soil and drainage are difficult and a lot of the area is shaded by tall trees.

A Possible Future?

Community consultation has identified widespread desire for:

- A local shop and/or opportunities for occasional farmers/craft market
- Social space e.g with coffee not only but also for teens
- Local medical facilities (e.g. space for weekly(?) clinics)
- Local employment opportunities
- Sports facilities relevant to residents that will get used by local people
- A small amount of new housing that is affordable and suited to couples, young families and the elderly who are connected to the village and wish to grow/stay in the area
- Public charging facilities for electric cars

Creating a plan for expanding/adapting the existing Hall and surroundings could bring:

- A small number of new predominantly affordable homes prioritized for residents/people with village links perhaps via a Community Trust and/or the new First Homes programme.
- An complex fit for our mid-21st century low carbon society that generates its own solar electricity, uses shared ground source heat pump facilities for heating, can provide public spots for charging electric cars and spaces for residents to “work near home” in a location with some social contact, high speed communications and some shared facilities.
- Space for a multi-purpose retail outlet that has a useful mix of everyday essentials, locally sourced food combined with a space for adult and teen socialising with refreshments etc and a community depot for sending and receiving on-line purchases. This should reduce the number of car journeys to and from the village.
- More relevant sports/leisure facilities for example; all-season tennis court(s) and/or 5-aside football/basketball pitch; an enhanced play area, space for a local gym. Possibly a higher grade full size football pitch.
- A space for local delivery of some medical/other care services so residents do not have to travel – besides reducing car journeys, this would be valuable for non-drivers and the elderly.
- The potential for some small business activity that creates some local employment opportunity but is suited to the village environment and not overly intensive in terms of vehicle movements.

Overall this proposal could not only update and significantly expand facilities in the centre of the village but if widely embraced by residents could also provide new energy and cohesion to the community. If the proposal garners support from residents, we need a small team to develop detail and determine the economic and social feasibility to a point where it can be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Proposal for a Community-led Development Project to create 21st Century Village Hub in Ecchinswell

Concept is the creation of a...

- “Village Hall and Community Hub ... A modern multi-functional centre for Ecchinswell”
- Based around the existing Village Hall & Playing Field
- Maintains existing multi-purpose hall for village events, regular & one-off hirings and an extensive recreation/sports area.
- Includes +/- 5 affordable homes prioritised for people with local connections plus new/upgraded facilities that could enable a broader range of activities desired by local residents... for example
 - community shop with café etc
 - opportunity for pop-up markets etc
 - office/meeting space, premises for small businesses
 - space for medical/other care service delivery
 - space for medical/other care service delivery
 - new sports/recreation options desired by local residents (e.g. tennis, 5-a-side football....)
 - upgraded play area, social space for teens
 - shared “work near home” facilities
 - electric car charging points for public use taking
 - power from PV panels on Village Hall/other roof space
 - modern, efficient, low-carbon buildings with ground source heat pumps, high grade insulation etc
- At this stage, an outline concept to confirm community interest
- Many of the needs/suggestions came from residents at September 2021 consultaion.
- Concept based around the existing Village Hall/Recreation Field which is owned by Parish Council for use by the Community and operated by a charity (“Ecchinswell Village Hall and Recreation Ground”).
- Idea tested with Parish Council and Chair of the charity who are supportive.
- Overall supported by the community at May 2022 consultation although with a few strong objections and some scepticism over viability and deliverability.
- Basic concept can be included in the Neighbourhood Plan to be taken forward as “Neighbourhood Development Order” if community support for a more detailed plan is confirmed.
- Turning concept into reality requires formation of a dedicated Community Team.
- A complex project requiring sustained community support and leadership.